

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ACDA-07 ARAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00
INRE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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O 071730Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4757

C O N F I D E N T I A L GEORGETOWN 1200

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PARM, GY
SUBJECT: GUYANA REQUEST TO TERMINATE AIR BASE AGREEMENT

REF: (A) GEORGETOWN 935, (B) GEORGETOWN 1013,
(C) STATE 110790, (D) GEORGETOWN 1135.
(E) BLACKEN/TUMMINIA TELECON JUNE 2

SUMMARY: DURING RECENT WEEKS PRIME MINISTER BURNHAM HAS INQUIRED SEVERAL TIMES CONCERNING WHEN THE US WOULD ANSWER HIS REQUEST TO TERMINATE THE ATKINSON FIELD AIR BASE AGREEMENT. PER MY ORIGINAL INSTRUCTIONS I RESPONDED MERELY THAT THE MATTER WAS UNDER CONSIDERATION; HOWEVER, FOLLOWING REF TELECON, I TOLD HIM THAT HE COULD EXPECT A FAVORABLE RESPONSE AND THAT UNDER SECRETARY HABIB WOULD BRING IT. NEVERTHELESS, BURNHAM REMAINS NERVOUS ABOUT THE MATTER. HE HAS SAID HE WANTS IT CLEAR IN ANY PUBLICITY THAT THE GOG REQUESTED THE TERMINATION. IN VIEW OF THE SENSITIVITY WITH WHICH THIS MATTER IS VIEWED HERE, I RECOMMEND THAT THE DEPARTMENT MAKE KNOWN TO ME ITS PREFERENCES FOR HANDLING IT AND AUTHORIZE ME TO DISCUSS IT WITH THE GOG SO THAT WE CAN AVOID ANY MIS-UNDERSTANDINGS. END SUMMARY.

1. AS INDICATED REFS D AND E, BURNHAM HAS INQUIRED SEVERAL
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TIMES ABOUT THE TERMINATION OF THE US-GOG AIR BASE AGREEMENT. FOLLOWING MY JUNE 2 TELCON WITH TUMMINIA, I TOLD BURNHAM THAT I ANTICIPATED A FAVORABLE RESPONSE AND THAT UNDER SECRETARY HABIB WOULD BRING IT. HE EXPRESSED SATISFACTION OVER THE NEWS AND SAID THAT HE COULD WAIT A LITTLE LONGER AS INDEPENDENCE DAY --MAY 26-- WHEN HE HAD PLANNED TO ANNOUNCE THE TERMINATION OF THE AGREEMENT HAD PASSED. HE SAID THAT IT WOULD BE POLITICALLY

IMPORTANT TO HIM THAT IT BE MADE CLEAR THAT THE GOG HAD REQUESTED THE TERMINATION OF THE AGREEMENT. HE ASKED THAT WE CONSULT CONCERNING HOW THE MATTER IS TO BE HANDLED.

2. ON JUNE 4 I MENTIONED TO FONMIN WILLS BURNHAM'S REQUEST THAT WE CONSULT ON THE MANNER IN WHICH THE BASE TERMINATION IS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED. WILLS COMMENTED THAT HE DID NOT THINK THAT ANY ANNOUNCEMENT WOULD BE MADE. INSTEAD, THE AGREEMENT WOULD BE TERMINATED WITHOUT PUBLICITY. THEN THE NEXT TIME THAT THE OPPOSITION RAISED THE MATTER IN PARLIAMENT, THE GOVERNMENT WOULD SIMPLY SAY THAT THE AGREEMENT HAD BEEN TERMINATED BY MUTUAL AGREEMENT AT GUYANA'S REQUEST.

3. BURNHAM CALLED ME AT 8:30 PM ON JUNE 6 AND SAID THAT AMBASSADOR MANN HAD MET WITH UNDERSECRETARY HABIB THAT DAY BUT THAT THE UNDER SECRETARY SEEMED TO BE UNAWARE THAT HE WOULD BRING THE OFFICIAL USG RESPONSE WITH HIM. HE THEN ASKED IF I WAS CERTAIN THAT THE DEPARTMENT WAS ACTING ON HIS REQUEST. I REPLIED THAT I WAS CERTAIN THAT THE DEPARTMENT WAS HANDLING THE MATTER AS I HAD TOLD HIM PREVIOUSLY.

4. COMMENT: DURING THE PAST FIVE WEEKS BURNHAM AND WILLS INQUIRED ABOUT THE REQUEST TO TERMINATE THE AIR BASE AGREEMENT SEVERAL TIMES. IN VIEW OF INSTRUCTIONS REF C, I RESTRICTED MY RESPONSES TO THEIR INITIAL INQUIRIES TO ASSURANCES THAT THEIR REQUEST WAS BEING CONSIDERED. ONLY AFTER MY TELCON WITH TUMMINIA JUNE 2 DID I PROVIDE SOME ASSURANCE THAT THEIR REQUEST PROBABLY WOULD RECEIVE A POSITIVE RESPONSE AND THAT UNDER SECRETARY HABIB WOULD BRING THE RESPONSE WITH HIM.
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BURNHAM'S CALL LAST NIGHT REVEALS HIS FEAR THAT SOMEHOW THIS MATTER MIGHT BE PLACED ON THE BACK BURNER BY THE US.

5. IN VIEW OF SENSITIVITIES HERE CONCERNING THE AIR BASE AGREEMENT, THE IMPORTANCE BURNHAM PLACES ON IT, AND TO PRECLUDE ANY MISUNDERSTANDINGS OR SURPRISES ON EITHER SIDE, I BELIEVE WE SHOULD REACH AGREEMENT WITH THE GOG IN ADVANCE ABOUT HOW THE TERMINATION WILL BE ACCOMPLISHED AND ALSO WHETHER AND HOW IT WILL BE PUBLICIZED. ACCORDINGLY, DOES THE DEPARTMENT HAVE ANY OBJECTION TO BURNHAM'S PROPOSAL THAT IT BE MADE CLEAR THAT HE REQUESTED THE AGREEMENT'S TERMINATION? IS THE TERMINATION TO BE ACCOMPLISHED BY A FORMAL EXCHANGE OF NOTES? ASSUMING THAT WILLS WAS CORRECTLY REFLECTING BURNHAM'S PREFERENCES IN SAYING THAT NO PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT SHOULD BE MADE AT THE TIME OF TERMINATION, WOULD THIS PROCEDURE BE ACCEPTABLE TO THE DEPARTMENT? IF THE DEPARTMENT HAS ANY OTHER INSTRUCTIONS ON THIS MATTER, PLEASE PROVIDE ME WITH THEM AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. OTHERWISE THE TENDENCY HERE FOR THINGS TO DEVELOP A MOMENTUM OF THEIR OWN MIGHT PREVAIL

AND THEY COULD MAKE DECISIONS WITHOUT BEING AWARE OF US PREFERENCES.

6. GENERAL COMMENT ON DEALING WITH BURNHAM. THE SEVERAL INQUIRIES MADE BY BURNHAM AND WILLS CONCERNING THE STATUS OF THE AIR BASE AGREEMENT INDICATE THEIR UNDERLYING INSECURITY IN DEALING WITH THE US. THE MANNER IN WHICH WE HANDLE OUR RELATIONS WITH GUYANA --AND BURNHAM PARTICULARLY--IS ALMOST AS IMPORTANT AS THE SUBSTANCE OF THE BUSINESS AT HAND. BURNHAM IS HYPER-SENSITIVE TO ACTIONS OR WORDS WHICH WOULD INDICATE EITHER A WILLINGNESS TO UNDERSTAND HIS PROBLEMS AND BE HELPFUL OR, CONVERSELY, CAVALIER ATTITUDES SIGNALING A LACK OF CONCERN. NO MATTER THAT THE SIGNALS MIGHT BE IN-ADVERTENT AND NO OFFENSE INTENDED, BURNHAM TENDS TO CONCLUDE SUCH SIGNALS ARE DELIBERATE. HE RESPECTS FIRM ANSWERS AND STRAIGHTFORWARD EXPLANATIONS, SUCH AS I WAS ABLE TO GIVE HIM WHEN WE REJECTED HIS REQUEST FOR BALANCE OF PAYMENTS ASSIS-
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TANCE. HE REACTS WITH IRRITATION TO NON-ANSWERS OR VAGUE RESPONSES. I BELIEVE THAT WHEN POSSIBLE, OR UNLESS WE ARE DELIBERATELY TRYING TO SEND NEGATIVE SIGNALS, WE SHOULD AVOID GIVING BURNHAM THE IMPRESSION THAT WE MIGHT BE PLAYING GAMES WITH HIM.
BLACKEN

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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
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